

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 438

TM 860 270

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TITLE A Co-Operative Provincial-Local Project to Evaluate Components of a Local System with a View to Initiating Change.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (70th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *Boards of Education; *Cooperative Programs; Educational Assessment; Educational Change; Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Needs; Federal Programs; Foreign Countries; *Models; *Program Evaluation; *School Districts; State Departments of Education
IDENTIFIERS Canada; Cooperative Eval and Develop of School Systems; Evaluation Research; *Model Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This paper describes an evaluation model developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education and illustrates how it was adapted to meet local and provincial needs of the Scarborough School System for accountability data and direction for change. The basic Cooperative Evaluation and Development of School Systems (CEDSS) model includes five stages of evaluation (initiation, internal evaluation, external evaluation, cooperative review, and final evaluation report) and three stages of development (analysis and response, implementation and incorporation). Three features of the school system prompted modification of the basic CEDSS model: (1) its large size; (2) its self-contained Research Centre; and (3) its desire to reflect the wishes of board employees and the public regarding evaluated topics. A provision was made for a Board Advisory Committee to provide input to decision making at various stages, and for an Initiation Team to assist in effecting system and community awareness and in eliciting a willingness to participate in CEDSS. The customary one-year timeline for a CEDSS project was extended to two years in Scarborough. A list of concerns for the evaluation phase of future CEDSS projects is presented. The benefits of this project both to the Ministry of Education and to the local school system are briefly described. (PN)

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A CO-OPERATIVE PROVINCIAL-LOCAL PROJECT
TO EVALUATE COMPONENTS OF A LOCAL SYSTEM
WITH A VIEW TO INITIATING CHANGE

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Abstract

When the maintenance of standards through program evaluation is of vital concern to both the provincial and local levels of education, conditions are ideal for co-operative ventures. The intent of this presentation is to describe an evaluation model developed by the Ministry of Education (Co-operative Evaluation and Development of School Systems or CEDSS) and to illustrate how it was adapted to meet local and provincial needs for accountability data and direction for change.

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AERA SYMPOSIUM NUMBER 47.24
(San Francisco, April, 1986)

RESOLVING THE TENSION BETWEEN
CENTRALIZED PROVINCIAL DIRECTION
AND LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD IMPLEMENTATION
OF CURRICULUM STANDARDS

A Co-operative Provincial-Local Project
to Evaluate Components of a Local
System with a View to Initiating Change

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47.24 / RESOLVING THE TENSION BETWEEN CENTRALIZED PROVINCIAL
DIRECTION AND LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD IMPLEMENTATION OF
CURRICULUM STANDARDS (Symposium, Division H)

CHAIR Edgar H. Wright, Toronto Board of Education (Canada)

PARTICIPANTS

An Overview of the Ontario Provincial Educational System, Its Curriculum
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Concerns About Implementing Provincial Curriculum Documents Within a
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Local Development and Use of a Student Evaluation Resource Document in
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A Cooperative Provincial-Local Project to Evaluate Components of a Local System
with a View to Initiating Change. H. J. Dilling, Scarborough Board of
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A CO-OPERATIVE PROVINCIAL-LOCAL PROJECT TO EVALUATE COMPONENTS
OF A LOCAL SYSTEM WITH A VIEW TO INITIATING CHANGE

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In the presentations prior to this one, you learned about Ontario Ministry of Education responsibilities for curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation. More important, however, you were told about the shifts in responsibility to the local level and how such shifts can result in feelings of tension because they make prediction and long range planning for the future difficult.

There was yet another shift of responsibility in Ontario education which contributed further to the tension. Prior to 1967, the Ministry of Education maintained control over education through a system of periodic inspections at the elementary and secondary levels. These inspections concentrated on evaluation of teachers and schools. Responsibility for such inspections was transferred to the local level, however, in 1967, when School Inspectors were replaced by provincial Education Officers, thus accenting further the change from "having to be responsible" to "being responsive".

This additional shift from the Ministry's patriarchal model to one of local responsibility was further reinforcement of the Ministry's desire to take a broader view of education--one concerned with program, atmosphere, environment, and process. In curriculum areas, for example, the shift was from such activities as evaluating achievement in Grade 13 physics to reviewing the total program in, say, the primary division. The risk-taking by the Ministry became very clear. Seldom during this period was there a time without cries from some source for "provincial tests", "common standards", "back to the basics", and other related standard-maintenance procedures.

Another aspect of the divestment of responsibility was the development of a view that boards were accountable not only to the Ministry but also to their communities. In other words, boards got to do the evaluations, but they had to be good enough to serve the accountability needs of both the Ministry and the local public. Amid these added burdens, coupled with concerns the Ministry must have had, is it any wonder that local-provincial tensions emerged?

In fact, at the local level, such tensions took the form of not only the expected increase in anxiety, but also of considerable excitement. Excitement stemmed from the potential for local growth that had not existed before. Anxiety increased because the rules of the game were no longer as clear as they once had been, and, in spite of the new freedom, the Ministry theoretically still had all of the old powers and could still come in to evaluate whoever and whatever they wished.

Therefore, it was with perhaps a mixture of concern and hope that the Scarborough Board of Education agreed to conduct a joint review of their system with the Ministry. Called a Co-operative Evaluation and Development of School Systems (or CEDSS), the review model was first publicized by the Ministry in 1973 and modified several times subsequently. It is designed to serve both provincial and school board needs for accountability data. As well, it provides data of use at the local level for addressing any need for system change.

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April, 1986.

The CEDSS model has several built-in components to ensure that common and unique jurisdictional needs are met, that tasks are shared co-operatively, and that some follow-up applications are implemented. Local boards of education have the option of entering into agreement with the Ministry of Education to conduct a CEDSS project. However, the Ministry objective, though not translated into the force of a regulation, is to have each board enter into such an agreement once every 10 years.

Scarborough's involvement commenced in 1979, when the Five Year Master Plan of the Board of Education included a recommendation that a CEDSS project be initiated. In May, 1980, a proposed plan, based on the Ontario model, was approved by the Board. The plan was to begin the project formally in September, 1980, and to complete the evaluation phase by June, 1982. A brief description of the general model, plus some details concerning the Scarborough elaborations, is presented below. This is followed by summary information on the evaluation procedures, considerations for the evaluation phase of future CEDSS projects, follow-up actions initiated in the development phase, and a set of summary statements.

The Nature of CEDSS

The basic CEDSS model (illustrated in Figure 1) includes two types of major activities--evaluation and development.

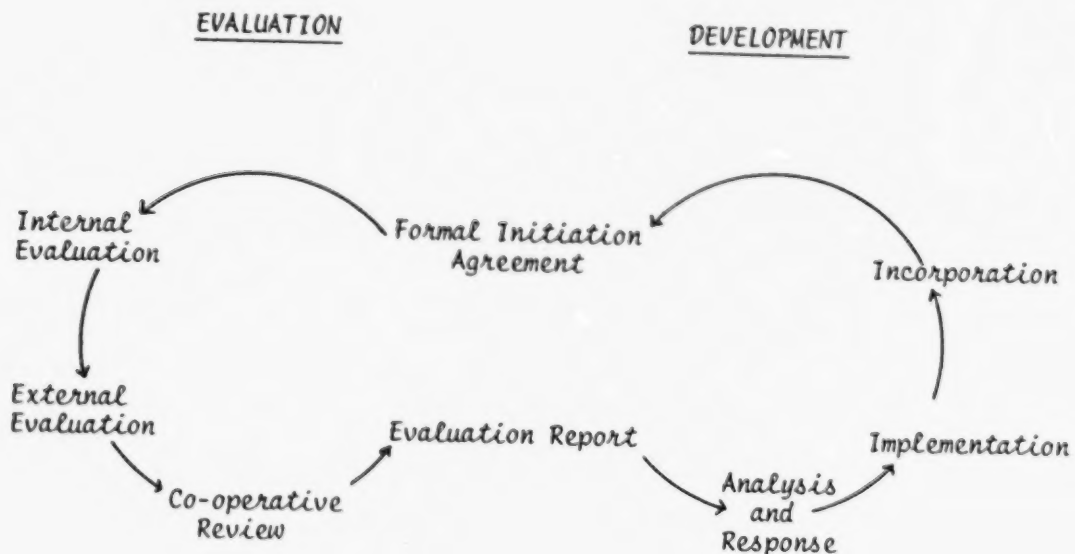


Figure 1. Model for the co-operative evaluation and development of school systems.

The five stages of the evaluation phase may be described as follows:

1. Initiation. The nature of the project is publicized throughout the community and the school system, with many opportunities for employees and members of the public to suggest areas and methods for evaluation. (The Ministry also has the right to request that certain areas be evaluated.)
2. Internal Evaluation. Board Staff, Trustees, community representatives, and students are involved in evaluating selected areas of the school system.
3. External Evaluation. A Ministry of Education team evaluates the same selected areas of the school system.
4. Co-operative Review. Representatives of the Internal and External Teams meet to discuss their findings.
5. Final Evaluation Report. Using the internal and external evaluations and the results of the co-operative review, a final evaluation report is prepared by the Ministry and presented to the Board.

After the report is presented to the Board, the plan calls for the completion of the three stages of the development phase as follows:

6. Analysis and Response. The final evaluation report is analyzed and recommendations are made for further action.
7. Implementation. New programs are introduced or existing programs are modified, with the changes being implemented on a trial basis.
8. Incorporation. Upon completion of the trial period, decisions are made to incorporate, cancel, or further modify the new or adapted programs or procedures.

Scarborough Elaborations of CEDSS Model

Prompting modification of the basic CEDSS model were three features of the Scarborough system: its size (the fifth largest in Canada, with 157 schools attended by about 80,000 students and staffed by 4,200 teachers); the fact that it, unlike other boards involved in CEDSS projects to date, had its own Research Centre; and an intense desire to ensure that the topics evaluated reflected the wishes of board employees and members of the public.

While details of the Scarborough model are described in the publications referenced at the end of this report, several elements are worthy of special note. In looking at the organizational plan for the evaluation phase (see Figure 2), for example, it may be seen that it has both Board

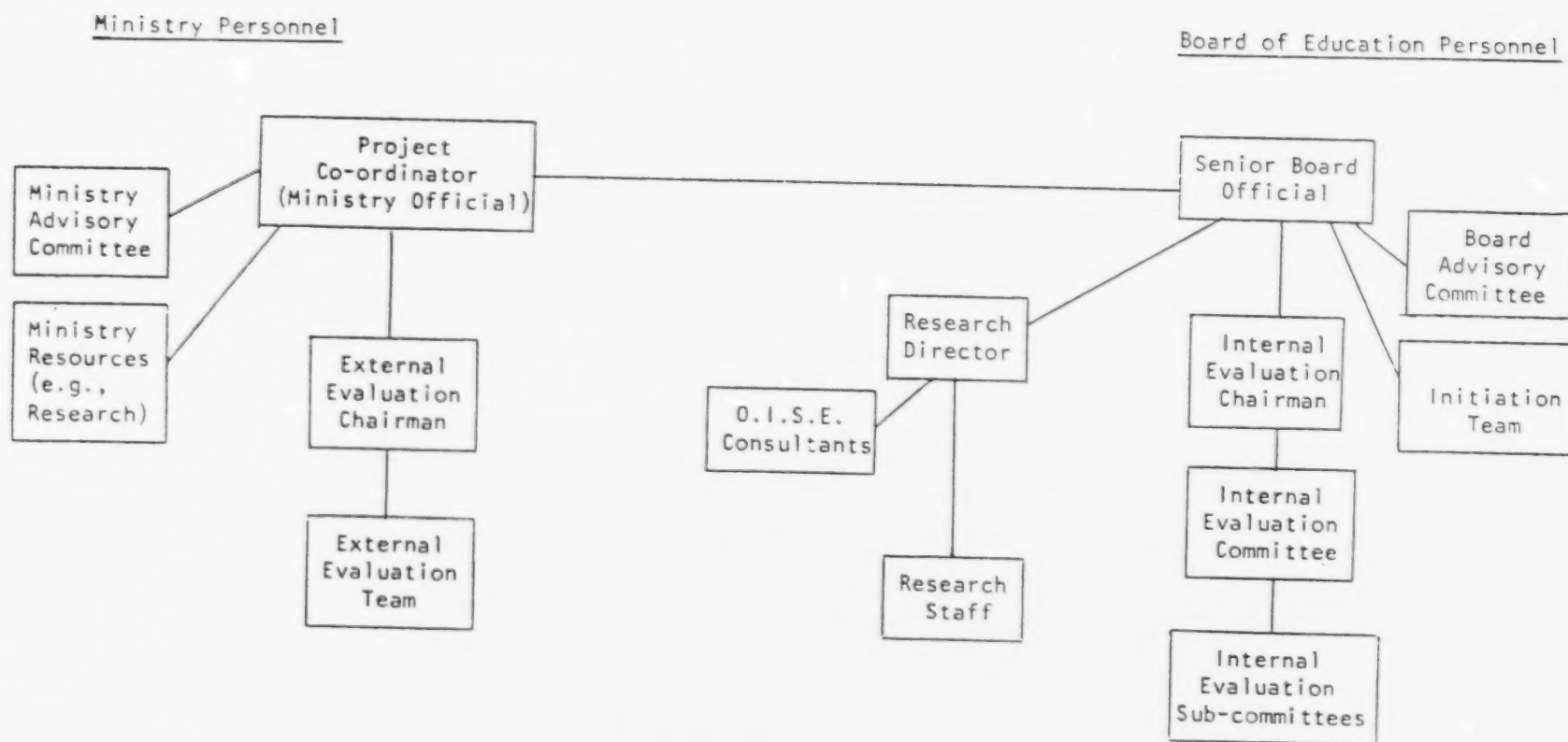


Figure 2. Organizational structure for Scarborough's implementation of the evaluation phase of CEDSS.

(headed by a Senior Board Official, the Assistant Director of Education) and Ministry (headed by a Project Co-ordinator) structures for the implementation of CEDSS/Scarborough. Of particular note is the provision made for a Board Advisory Committee (chaired by the Assistant Director) to provide input to decision making at various stages and for an Initiation Team (also chaired by the Assistant Director) to assist in effecting system and community awareness and in eliciting a willingness to participate in CEDSS. The Board Advisory Committee was comprised of 29 members representing teaching and support staff, administrators, trustees, students, the Scarborough Home and School Association, and members of the community. The Initiation Team included members of the Advisory Committee and individuals selected by that committee. The team was responsible for assisting the Internal Evaluation Committee (co-chaired by the Assistant Director and an Assistant Superintendent of Program) in all aspects of the Initiation Stage.

Another major modification of note is that the customary one-year timeline for a CEDSS project was extended to two years in Scarborough.

Procedures of Evaluation Phase

During the Initiation Stage, community awareness was accomplished through five public evening meetings (publicized in local newspapers, Communications Office publications, and in local school newsletters) held in different areas of Scarborough. Furthermore, to facilitate system awareness, kits of materials were prepared for use by principals with their school staffs and school communities. During these meetings, a list of possible areas to be evaluated (developed from input through interviews with administrative officials and representatives of educational and community organizations) was circulated, and requests for additional suggested areas were made. The process at all these meetings was facilitated by a filmstrip/tape presentation produced by the Board's Communications Office.

In addition, in February, 1981, a formal survey of trustees, administrative officials, Scarborough citizens (eligible voters), elementary teachers, secondary teachers, Grade 9-13 students, and non-teaching personnel was carried out by the Research Centre to assist in the final determination of evaluation priorities. Based on the results of the survey, the following seven areas were approved by the Board (on a recommendation from the Advisory Committee) on March 30, 1981:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Class Size | 5. Guidance Services |
| 2. Co-operative Education | 6. Special Education |
| 3. Discipline and Vandalism | 7. Student Self-Concept, |
| 4. General Level Courses | Motivation, and Morale |

Four of these areas (numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6) represented the top choices of the seven groups surveyed. Class Size and Co-operative Education represented statistical second choices, and number 7 was selected because it was felt to represent an area of great relevance to all students and because

it permeates all academic areas. Two facts should be noted concerning the list of topics selected. First, though school subjects had been included on the list of topics for possible evaluation, none was chosen as a top priority. Second, why did the Ministry not exercise its right to impose a topic, either subject-oriented or other, to be evaluated? Some insight suggests that the Ministry chose not to intercede because of strong desires to have this first CEDSS project in Metropolitan Toronto perceived as a fruitful and successful experience and also to respect the wishes of the seven Scarborough target groups as determined through a systematic procedure. Furthermore, many other CEDSS projects had conducted subject-oriented evaluations but had left evaluation of the areas investigated by Scarborough largely untapped.

While about four months was proposed for this Initiation Stage, the actual time taken was about eight months, thus putting the total set of planned activities already behind schedule by four months.

During the Internal Evaluation Stage, which commenced in March, 1981, a major Scarborough modification involved the creation of seven sub-committees (representing education, the community, students, and research) to provide advice, guidance, and assistance. Where applicable, personnel directly involved in the areas undergoing evaluation were also invited to serve on these sub-committees. Establishing the sub-committees required three months, rather than the proposed one month.

As might be anticipated, it was at this point that the researchers assigned to the seven sub-committees commenced their heaviest involvement-- providing reference materials, preparing draft data-collecting plans and instruments for consideration, writing interim reports to the Advisory Committee, and creating publicity documents to keep staff and the general public informed.

Since these steps in the Internal Evaluation Stage were not completed until January, 1982, and since the Ministry had initiated the formation of its External Evaluation Team so that they could aim for the deadline of June, 1982, this left very little of the allotted time for the actual research (i.e., data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing). To facilitate data collecting in the schools (though this provided added pressure on the researchers), February 8, 1982, was declared "CEDSS Day"--a day for completion of any questionnaires by all sampled educators and students in connection with any of the seven projects.

In any event, draft internal evaluation reports (in various stages), required for study by the External Evaluation Team, were ready for the team's one-week "blitz" in May, 1982. It should be noted that there had been minimal involvement in the process by the Ministry up to this point. Therefore, though the external evaluation is a necessary component if accountability information is to have credibility, the initiation of this "blitz" by external people might be expected to be the point at which maximum discomfort would be felt throughout the system. While some anxiety inevitably was there, it

appears that the pains taken to communicate with, and to involve, the educational community really paid off in terms of minimizing this anxiety.

Most of the internal evaluation reports (with their total of 118 recommendations) were then finalized by June, 1982, around the time that the Co-operative Review by the Internal and External Teams occurred.

The fifth stage of the evaluation phase, the preparation and presentation to the Scarborough Board of Education of the Final Evaluation Report by the Project Co-ordinator from the Ministry, occurred in January, 1983, about seven months after the planned time.

Considerations for Evaluation Phase of Future CEDSS Projects

What did we learn from the evaluation phase that could alert others to problems to be avoided? Mainly, it was clear that the involvement of so many people created scheduling difficulties; in spite of its obvious long-term advantages, democracy has its problems. In any event, to assist others, the following list of concerns to which attention should be given emerged from our deliberations:

1. Large Boards should not attempt to evaluate more than three or four major topics. This may necessitate the rejection of topics favoured by particular interest groups both within and without the system.
2. Six months should be the maximum time allowed for the Initiation Stage. There is a temptation to extend this part of the study, especially the process used to select areas of evaluation.
3. Because Scarborough is a large system, a two-year project (rather than the usual one year) was planned. This was designed to provide more time for effecting system and community awareness and for determining areas to be evaluated. While the benefits of this were clear, the greater-than-planned-for time required to complete these tasks resulted in the actual evaluation time having to be compressed inordinately. Associated with this was the problem of having to complete the internal evaluation report early enough in the school year so that data collection by the External Evaluation Team would relate to the same evaluation objectives and the same student and staff populations as were involved in the studies conducted by the internal evaluation sub-committees. Some procedure which guarantees about one and one-half years for the internal evaluation sub-committees to plan, evaluate, and report is desirable.
4. Large school systems which have a research department and which have become accustomed to using its expertise in major studies will find a need to have the research department become deeply involved in the CEDSS project. Care should be taken by other boards to ensure that the need for research assistance is met from the outset of a CEDSS undertaking.

5. Several problems were associated with the fact that time lines were the same for the activities of all seven sub-committees. Specifically, there was a heavy workload in putting research plans into operation, there was difficulty in scheduling computer services for the analysis of great quantities of data, and there was a significant overload on secretarial services.
6. Firm commitments to a schedule of data analysis should be obtained early from both local and Ministry of Education departments responsible for providing computer data analysis services.
7. The Internal Evaluation Chairman should have his/her normal duties rearranged in order to allow him/her to spend adequate time in overseeing the project.

Follow-up Actions: Development Phase

It is perhaps during the development phase that the greatest rewards of "involvement" are reaped. As a result of much attention to this factor in Scarborough, awareness, commitment, and "ownership" were then demonstrated by many people in the system.

In fact, the Analysis and Response Stage, the first stage of the development phase, was completed smoothly through the creation of an Analysis and Response Steering Committee to which seven re-constituted sub-committees (with some changes in membership) reported after considering the recommendations emerging from the evaluation phase and working out action plans.

The action plans also designated the department of the Scarborough Board of Education (i.e., Personnel, Planning and Operations, Program, or Student and Community Services) that would normally be responsible for each recommended action. After the composite analysis and response report was submitted by the Steering Committee to the Board, the Implementation and Incorporation Stages then became automatic. Accountability for these two stages also became automatic through the annual setting of objectives and reporting of achievement required in connection with the Scarborough Planning Guide.

In short, the whole CEDSS exercise, though a nightmare of scheduling and workload, was a researcher's dream of problem identification, commitment through involvement, and action based on research data.

Summary Statements

What does all this mean, then, in terms of the reduction of the provincial-local tensions to which many references have been made? The basic answer is that there are enough pay-offs for both parties to make the co-operative venture worthwhile.

To the Ministry of Education, for example, the following benefits accrue:

1. Protection, because the process exists. With Ministry decentralization, there is a need to ensure that there is acceptance of responsibility for evaluation, or accountability, at the local level. In fact, the increasing number of CEDSS projects being commenced suggests that both provincial and local jurisdictions perceive the existence of the protective element.
2. Provision of accountability data. The CEDSS model is a "divisional model" of evaluation, similar to that available to industry. The provision of concrete data from different (local) components of the total (provincial) system is an invaluable aid to Ontario's Education Officers who must defend the system frequently. Several "snapshots" can help form an acceptable composite picture.
3. Provision for meeting unique provincial evaluation needs. In spite of the fact that topics are chosen largely by the local system, the Ministry has the right to request the inclusion of any timely topic for evaluation. This right has been exercised in many CEDSS projects in Ontario; while it was not exercised in the Scarborough project, the probable reasons were indicated previously in this paper.

Major benefits to the local system include the following:

1. Development of cohesiveness. The many co-operative ventures characteristic of a CEDSS project engender a stronger desire by local employees to continue working together. Furthermore, tensions which exist traditionally between teacher groups and the Ministry can dissipate as a result of their mutual involvement in CEDSS.
2. Provision of direction. Data-based decision making reveals where action should be taken to effect system improvement. For example, recommendations were translated into objectives and action plans for the Scarborough Planning Guide.
3. Provision for meeting unique local evaluation needs. While evaluation topics are usually selected on the basis of general needs or wishes, even small lobby groups (such as parents of French Immersion students) have recourse to a system which may choose to act on their unique wishes.

In short, the provision of a procedure which serves both local and provincial accountability needs goes a long way toward bridging the gap between the apprehension of unpredictability and the comfort of status quo consistency. Also, CEDSS appears to reduce the threat of central control by meeting some of the objectives of a large-scale assessment plan of provincial scope.

References

Publications developed during the Internal Evaluation Stage of CEDSS Scarborough. (Available on microfiche through the Ontario Government Bookstore, 880 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1L2--cost payable to the Treasurer of Ontario by cheque, money order, Visa, or Master Charge)

1. Internal Evaluation Report No. 1. An Introduction and Overview. This report provides a description of the Scarborough School System, the background to CEDSS, a brief history of the CEDSS project in Scarborough, a list of considerations for future CEDSS projects, and the lists of recommendations made by the seven internal evaluation sub-committees. Of particular value also are the three appendices: a copy of the proposal for implementing CEDSS in Scarborough, results of the surveys conducted to assist in determining the areas to be evaluated, and a copy of the handbook developed for use by the CEDSS internal evaluation sub-committees. (ON02998; cost--\$1.00)
2. Internal Evaluation Report No. 2: An Evaluation of Class Size in Scarborough Schools. (ON02999; cost--\$1.50)
3. Internal Evaluation Report No. 3: An Evaluation of Scarborough's Co-operative Education Program. (ON03000; cost--\$4.50)
4. Internal Evaluation Report No. 4: An Evaluation of Discipline and Vandalism in Scarborough Schools. (ON03001; cost--\$1.50)
5. Internal Evaluation Report No. 5: An Evaluation of Scarborough's General Level Courses. (ON03002; cost--\$1.50)
6. Internal Evaluation Report No. 6: An Evaluation of Guidance Services in Scarborough Schools. (ON03003; cost--\$2.50)
7. Internal Evaluation Report No. 7: An Evaluation of Special Education in Scarborough Schools. (ON03004; cost--\$2.50)
8. Internal Evaluation Report No. 8: An Evaluation of Student Self-Esteem in Scarborough Schools. (ON03005; cost--\$1.00)

Additional Publication

Steps to Be Taken in Conducting a Survey, 8 pages. Available from Research Centre, Scarborough Board of Education, 140 Borough Drive, Scarborough, Ontario, M1P 4N6. (Hard copy cost--\$2.00)